

**Oral Testimony
Thomas B. Modly
Secretary of the Navy, Acting
House Armed Services Committee
27 February 2020**

**Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Thornberry,
distinguished Members of this Committee, thank
you for your bipartisan efforts on behalf of the
Sailors, Marines and civilians in the Department
of the Navy.**

It is an honor to be here today with Admiral Gilday and General Berger, both of whom have demonstrated great commitment to each other, and to each other's respective naval service, as they have worked collaboratively to lead our integrated American naval force.

Consistent with that spirit, we've taken a different approach to the written testimony this year, submitting one unified document instead of three separate statements.

Staying ahead in today's rapidly changing global strategic environment demands that our naval forces commit to unified planning, clear-eyed assessments, and sometimes, some very hard choices.

In this process, we must harmonize competing priorities, sustain our critical industrial base, and not allow our maritime competitive advantage to erode relative to global competitors and, more accurately stated, aggressive adversaries, who wish to hasten our decline as a global force for liberty and decency.

In the end, this budget submission is a manifestation of the hard choices we had to make this year---but it is centrally about the safety, security, and well-being of our Sailors, Marines, and their families.

Ultimately, I ask that you recognize that in this submission we could not make trades that put our Sailors and Marines on platforms, and with equipment, that are not ready for a fight—if a fight is what is required of them.

While this budget slows our trajectory to a force of 355 or more ships—it does not arrest it. You have my personal assurance that we are still deeply committed to building that larger, more capable, more distributed naval force within the strategically relevant timeframe of no more than ten years.

I look forward to working with this committee and the entire Congress in the coming months as we develop realistic plans to do so.

**Our budget also demonstrates a clear
commitment to the education of our people as we
implement the recommendations of the
Education for Seapower study that I lead as the
Under Secretary of the Navy.**

We are establishing a Naval Community College for our enlisted personnel as part of a bold and unified Naval Education Strategy that recognizes that the intellectual and ethical development of our people is critical to our success as a naval force.

We are also stepping up our efforts to meet our solemn commitment to our military families through significantly more engaged oversight and accountability of the Public Private Venture housing program.

Finally, I would like this committee to understand that as leaders of the Department of the Navy, we are both vocal and united in our determination to prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment throughout our force.

Every Sailor, Marine, and Navy civilian deserve individual respect, dignity...AND PROTECTION.... from this great naval institution. We have work to do in this regard, but you have my personal commitment that we take it very, very seriously.

We are grateful to the Committee for passing this year's NDAA, which enables many of the priorities identified within this document. In passing this legislation, you've sent a strong signal of support to our people – and a stern warning to our adversaries.

We also appreciate the funding stability and predictability of the past several years.

This has saved money for the American taxpayer, and given our force the agility and flexibility to address emerging threats while investing in our integrated force.

We urge the Committee to do what it can to continue this stability so that we can implement the reforms and investments required to meet the great power challenge, protect the maritime commons, and defend the United States of America.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to your questions.